

Government Orders

are achieved painstakingly and only after enormous difficulties. Respite is infrequent and rewards are few.

Much of this challenging process has been admirably led to success by the Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs, whose perseverance and dedication have earned the respect and the admiration of all Canadians everywhere.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

• (1510)

Mr. Mulroney: On behalf of the Canadian people, I salute the impressive and durable contribution he has made to our country.

[*Translation*]

Allow me, also, Mr. Speaker, to pay tribute to the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the hon. member for Roberval, who has throughout this lengthy process always shown his ability to reconcile his profound loyalty to his Quebec roots with his love for Canada. He has brilliantly demonstrated that there is a natural link that exists between Quebec nationalism and Canadian patriotism.

[*English*]

Tribute must be paid as well to the provincial premiers, the territorial leaders and the aboriginal leadership. It is my view that they, all of them, set aside regional and special interests to serve first and foremost the national interest, thereby making possible the Charlottetown agreement.

[*Translation*]

Nor would this achievement have been possible without the substantial and vigorous contributions to the national unity debate by the leaders of the two recognized opposition parties in the House of Commons. They and their supporters can take pride in the Charlottetown agreement because they contributed tangibly to its development.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the devotion and skill of all the public servants who participated in this process, from the provinces and territories as well as from the aboriginal peoples and the Canadian government. Normally, public servants work in the background, but I believe that the contributions of Paul Tellier, Jocelyne Bourgon, Suzanne Hurtubise, Scott Serson, John Tait, Mary Dawson and Jim Judd are particularly worthy of

special mention and exemplify the excellence and dedication of the Public Service of Canada.

[*English*]

This agreement, if endorsed by the Canadian people and enshrined in our Constitution, will mark an accomplishment that has eluded many generations of Canadians and their elected representatives. It marks the unanimous acceptance by all elected heads of government in Canada of a series of fundamental reforms designed to strengthen our nationhood and enhance our citizenship.

To achieve such unanimity is no small feat in itself. It is all the more so because of the infrequency with which it has come to pass in constitutional deliberations here and in democratic societies elsewhere in the world.

[*Translation*]

For example, attempts to reach agreement on constitutional change in Canada began in 1927 and were made on nine subsequent attempts from 1931 to 1990. Ultimately, agreement among Canadians on this matter proved elusive, and all these efforts at reform ended in some measure of failure or a lack of complete success. The act of 1982 was incomplete because of the absence of Quebec from the agreement. The Meech Lake accord, which sought to redress this unacceptable situation and which was, on two occasions, unanimously endorsed by all first ministers, was in the end, not ratified by two provinces.

I believe, that this agreement completes the unfinished business of 1982 and fulfils the promise of 1987. Above all, it builds upon the foundation of 1867.

[*English*]

When Sir John A. Macdonald shaped a compact that gave rise to this great country, it reflected who we were then, as four British colonies on the northern half of our continent.

He was right. He turned out to be very right when he predicted a brilliant future for Canada and ensuing generations were able to achieve the greatness that he foresaw for all of us and that he had worked so hard to achieve.

In 1865 Sir John described the agreement reached then in terms which I believe are equally applicable today. He said: "The whole scheme bears upon its face